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THE MORAL JUSTIFICATION OF RELIGION

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It is generally agreed that religion is either the paramount issue or the most serious obstacle to progress. To its devotees religion is of overwhelming importance; to unbelievers it is, in the phrasing of Burke, "superstitious folly, enthusiastical nonsense, and holy tyranny." The difference between the friends and the enemies of religion may, I think, be resolved as follows. Religion recognizes some final arbitration of human destiny; it is a lively awareness of the fact that, while man proposes, it is only within certain narrow limits that he can dispose his own plans. His nicest adjustments and most ardent longings are overruled; he knows that until he can discount or conciliate that which commands his fortunes his condition is precarious and miserable. And through his eagerness to save himself he leaps to conclusions that are uncritical and premature. Irreligion, on the other hand, flourishes among those who are more snugly intrenched within the cities of man. It is a product of civilization. Comfortably housed as he is, and enjoying an artificial illumination behind drawn blinds, the irreligious man has the heart to criticize the hasty speculations and abject fear of those who stand without in the presence of the surrounding darkness. In other words, religion is perpetually on the exposed side of civilization, sensitive to the blasts that blow from the surrounding universe; while irreligion is in the lee of civilization, with enough remove from danger to foster a refined concern for logic and personal liberty. There is a sense, then, in which both religion and irreligion are to be justified. If religion is guilty of unreason, irreligion is guilty of apathy. For without doubt the situation of the individual man is broadly such as religion conceives it to be. There is nothing that he can build, nor any precaution that he can take, that weighs appreciably in the balance against the powers which decree good and ill fortune, catastrophe and tri-

umph, life and death. Hence to be without fear is the part of folly. Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom.

Religion is man's recognition of the overruling control of his fortunes. It is neither metaphysical nor mythical, but urgently practical. Primeval chaos, Chronos the father of Zeus, and the long line of speculative Absolutes have no worshippers because they take no hand in man's affairs. They may be neglected with impunity. But not so the gods who send health and sickness, fertility and death, victory and defeat, or he who sits in judgment on the last day to determine the doom of eternity. Religion is the manifestation of supreme concern for life, an alertness to the remotest threat of danger and promise of hope. A certain momentousness attaches to all the affairs of religion, because everything is at stake. Its dealings are with the last court of appeal, in behalf of the most indispensable good.

In form, religion is a case of *belief*; that is, of settled conviction. There is no religion until some interpretation of life, some accommodation between man and God, has been so far accepted as to be unhesitatingly practised. The absurdity of doubt in matters of religion has been pointed in the well-known parody, "O God, if there be a God, save my soul, if I have a soul." The quality of religion lies not in the entertaining of a speculative hypothesis, but in an assurance so confident that its object is not only thought, but enacted. God is not God until his unquestioned existence is assimilated to life. Indeed, it is conceivable that an object thus made the basis of action should still remain theoretically doubtful. To Fontenelle is attributed the remark that he "did not believe in ghosts, but was afraid of them." This is a paradox until we distinguish theoretical and practical conviction; then it becomes not only credible, but commonplace. If one prays to God, it is not necessary for the purposes of religion that one should in Fontenelle's sense believe in him. But I prefer to use the term "belief" more strictly, to connote such assent as expresses itself, not in a deliberate judgment made conformable to one's intellectual conscience, but in fear, love, and purpose, in habitual imagery, in any attitude or activity that is spontaneous and that freely presupposes the object with which it deals.

By conceiving religion as belief we may understand not only

its air of certainty but also the variety of its forms and agencies. Belief sits at the centre of life and qualifies all its manifestations. Hence the futility of attempting to associate religion exclusively with any single function of man. The guises in which religious belief may appear are as multiform as human nature, and will vary with every shading of mood and temperament. Its central objects may be thought, imagined, or dealt with—in short, responded to in all the divers ways, internal and overt, that the powers and occasions of life define.

This will suffice, I trust, to lay the general topic of religion before us. I shall employ the terms and phrases which I have formulated as a working definition: Religion is belief on the part of individuals or communities concerning the final or overruling control of their interests. I propose from this point to keep in the forefront of the discussion the standards whereby religion is to be estimated, and approved or condemned. On what grounds may a religion be criticized? What would constitute the proof of an absolute religion? History is strewn with discredited religions; men began to quarrel over religion so soon as they had any; and it is customary for every religious devotee to believe jealously and exclusively. There can be no doubt, then, that religion is subject to justification; it remains to distinguish the tests which may with propriety be applied, and in particular to isolate and emphasize the moral test.

In the first place let me mention briefly a test which it is customary to apply, but which is not so much an estimate as it is a measure. I refer to the various respects in which an individual or community may be said to be *more* or *less* religious. Thus, for example, certain religious phenomena surpass others in acuteness or intensity. This is peculiarly true of the phenomena manifested in conversion and in revivals. In this respect the mysteries of the ancients exceeded their regular public worship. Individuals and communities vary in the degree to which they are capable of enthusiasm, excitement, or ecstasy.

Or a religion may be measured extensively. He whose religion is constant and uniform is more religious than he whose observance is confined to the Sabbath day, or he whose concern in the matter appears only in time of trouble or at the approach

of death. This test may best be summed up in terms of consistency. Religion may vary in the degree to which it pervades the various activities of life. That religion is confined and small which manifests itself only in words or public deeds or emotions exclusively. If it is to be effective it must be systematic, so thoroughly adopted as to be cumulative and progressive. It must engage every activity, qualify all thought and imagination, in short, infuse the whole of life with its saving grace.

It is clear, however, that a measure of religion does not constitute either proof or disproof. If a religion be good or true, or on like grounds accredited, then the more of it the better. But differences of degree appear in all religions. Indeed, the quantitative test has been most adequately met by forms of religion the warrant of which is generally held to be highly questionable. We may, therefore, dismiss this test without further consideration. The application of it must be based upon a prior and more fundamental justification.

There is one test of religion which has been universally applied by believers and critics alike, a test which, I think, will shortly appear to deserve precedence over all others. I refer to the test of truth. Every religion has been justified to its believers and recommended to unbelievers on grounds of evidence. It has been verified in its working, or attested by either observation, reflection, revelation, or authority.

In spite of the general assent which this proposition will doubtless command, it is deserving of special emphasis at the present time. Students of religion have latterly shifted attention from its claims to truth to its utility and subjective form. This pragmatic and psychological study of religion has created no little confusion of mind concerning its real meaning, and obscured that which is after all its essential claim—the claim, namely, to offer an illumination of life. Religious belief, like all belief, is reducible to judgments. These judgments are not, it is true, explicit and theoretically formulated; but they are none the less answerable to evidence from that context of experience to which they refer. It is true that the believer's assurance is not consciously rational, but it is none the less liable before the court of reason. Cardinal Newman fairly expressed the difference be-

tween the method of religion and the method of science when he said that "ten thousand difficulties do not make one doubt," that "difficulty and doubt are incommensurate." Nevertheless, the difficulties are in each case germane; and the fact that every article of faith has its besetting doubt is proof that the thorough justification of faith requires the settlement of theoretical difficulties.

No religion can survive the demonstration of its untruth, for salvation, whether present or eternal, depends on processes actually operative in the environment. Religion must reveal the undeniable situation, and prepare man for it. It must charge the unbeliever with being guilty of folly, with deceiving himself through failing to see and take heed. Every religious propaganda is a cry of warning, putting men on their guard against invisible dangers; or a promise of succor, bringing glad tidings of great joy. And its prophecy is empty and trivial if the danger or the succor can be shown to be unreal. The one unfailing bias in life is the bias for disillusionment, springing from the organic instinct for that real environment to which, whether friendly or hostile, it must adapt itself. Every man knows in his heart that he cannot be saved through being deceived. Illusions cannot endure; and those who lightly perpetrate them are fortunate if they escape the resentment and swift vengeance which overtook the prophets of Baal.

The grounds of religious truth will require prolonged consideration; but before discussing them further let me first mention a test of religion which belongs to the class of psychological and pragmatic tests to which I have just alluded, but which has latterly assumed special prominence. Though realizing that I use a somewhat disparaging term, I suggest that we call this the therapeutic test. It has been proved that the state of piety possesses a direct curative value through its capacity to exhilarate or pacify, according to the needs of a disordered mind. As a potent form of suggestion, it lends itself to the uses of psychiatry; it may be medicinally employed as a tonic, stimulant, or sedative.

Now we can afford to remind ourselves that from the point of view of the patient this use of religion bears a striking resemblance to certain primitive practices in which God was conceived as a

glorified medicine-man, and the healing of the body strangely confused with spiritual regeneration. Bishop Gregory of Tours once addressed the following apostrophe to the worshipful St. Martin: "O unspeakable theriac! ineffable pigment! admirable antidote! celestial purgative! superior to all the skill of physicians, more fragrant than aromatic drugs, stronger than all ointments combined! thou cleanest the bowels as well as scammony, and the lungs as well as hyssop; thou cleanest the head as well as camomile!"¹

It is true that religion is in these days recommended for more subtle disorders; but even religious ecstasy may be virtually equivalent to a mere state of emotional exhilaration, or piety to a condition of mental and moral stupor. What does it profit a man to be content with his lot, or to experience the rapture of the saints, if he has lost his soul? The saving of a soul is a much more serious matter than the cessation of worry or the curing of insomnia, or even than the acquiring of a habit of delirious joy. Tranquillity and happiness are, it is true, the legitimate fruits of religion, but only provided they be infused with goodness and truth. If religion is to be a spiritual tonic, and not merely a physical tonic, it must be based on moral organization and intellectual enlightenment. I do not doubt that religion has in all times recommended itself to men mainly through its contributing to their lives a certain peculiar buoyancy and peace. There is such a generic value in religion, which cannot be attributed wholly to any of its component parts. But, like the intensity or extent of religion, this may manifest itself upon all levels of development. Sound piety, a tranquillity and happiness which mark the soul's real salvation, must be founded on truth, on an interpretation of life which expresses the fullest light. Again, then, we are referred to the test of truth for the fundamental justification of religion. There is a generic value which is deserving of the last word, but that word can be said only after a rigorous examination of the moral fundamental values from which it is derived.

Religious truth is divisible into two judgments, involved in every religious belief, and answerable respectively to ethical and

¹ Munro and Sellery, *Mediaeval Civilization*, p. 69.

cosmological evidence. Since religion is a belief concerning the overruling control of human interests, it involves on the one hand a summing up of these interests, a conception of what the believer has at stake, in short an ethical judgment; and on the other hand, an interpretation of the environment at large, in other words a cosmological judgment. Religion construes the practical situation in its totality; which means that it generalizes concerning the content of fortune, or the good, and the sources of fortune, or nature. Both factors are invariably present, and no religion can escape criticism on this twofold ground.

The ethical implications of religion are peculiarly far-reaching, since they determine not only its conception of man, but also in part its conception of God. This is due to the fact that the term God signifies not the environment in its inherent nature, but the environment in its bearing on the worshipper's interests. It follows that whether God be construed as favorable or hostile will depend upon the worshipper's conception of these interests. Thus, if worldly success or long life be regarded as the values most eagerly to be conserved, God must be feared as cruel or capricious; whereas, if the lesson of discipline and humility be conceived as the highest good, the providence of God may be trusted without any change in its manifestation.

Furthermore, as we shall shortly have occasion to remark, it is characteristic of religion to insist, so far as possible, upon the favorableness of the environment. But this favorableness must be construed in terms of what are held to be man's highest interests. Consequently, the disposition and motive of God always reflect human purposes. This is the main source of the inevitable anthropomorphism of religion.

Conceptions of nature, on the other hand, define the degree to which the environment is morally determined, and the unity or plurality of its causes. Animism, for example, reflects the general opinion that the causes of natural events are wilful rather than mechanical. Such an opinion obtained at the time when no sharp distinction was made between inorganic and organic phenomena, the action of the environment being conceived as a play of impulses.

Religion is corrected, then, by light obtained from these sources :

man's knowledge of his highest interests and his knowledge of nature. As a rule, one or the other of these two methods of criticism tends to predominate in accordance with the genius of the race or period. Thus the evolution of Greek religion is determined mainly by the development of science. Xenophanes attacks the religion of his times on the ground of its crude anthropomorphism. "Mortals," he says, "think that the gods are born as they are, and have perception like theirs, and voice and form." But this naïve opinion Xenophanes corrects because it is not consistent with the new enlightenment concerning the ἀρχή, or first principle of nature. "And he [God] abideth ever in the same place, moving not at all; nor doth it befit him to go about, now hither, now thither."²

In a later age Lucretius criticized the whole system of Greek religion in terms of the atomistic and mechanical cosmology of Epicurus:

For verily not by design did the first-beginnings of things station themselves each in its right place guided by keen intelligence, nor did they bargain sooth to say what motions each should assume, but because many in number and shifting about in many ways throughout the universe, they are driven and tormented by blows during infinite time past, after trying motions and unions of every kind at length they fall into arrangements such as those out of which our sum of things has been formed.³

In the light of such principles Lucretius demonstrates the absurdity of hoping or fearing anything from a world beyond or a life to come. In this case, as in the case above, the religion of enlightenment does not differ essentially from the religion of the average man in its conception of the interests at stake, but only in its conception of the methods of worship or forms of imagery which it is reasonable to employ in view of the actual nature of the environment.

If on the other hand we turn to the early development of the Hebrew religion, we find that it is corrected to meet the demands not of cosmological, but of ethical enlightenment. No question arises as to the existence or power of God, but only as to what he

² Fragments of Xenophanes. Burnet, *Early Greek Philosophy*, p. 115.

³ Lucretius, *De Rerum Natura*, i, 1021-28. Translation by Munro.

requires of those who serve him. The prophets represent the moral genius of the race, its acute discernment of the causes of social integrity or decay. "And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood. Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil: learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow."⁴

But whichever of these two methods of criticism predominates, it is clear that they both draw upon bodies of truth which grow independently of religion. The history of Christianity affords a most remarkable record of the continual adjustment of religious belief to secular rationality. The offices of religion have availed no more to justify cruelty, intolerance, and bigotry than to establish the Ptolemaic astronomy or the scriptural account of creation. This is more readily admitted in the case of natural science than in the case of ethics, but only because teachers of religion have commonly had a more expert acquaintance with moral matters than with the orbits of the planets or the natural history of the earth.

For the principles of conduct, like the principles of nature, must be derived from a study of the field to which they are applied. They require nothing more for their establishment than the analysis and generalization of the moral situation. If two or more persons conduct themselves with reference to one another and to an external object, their action either possesses or lacks, in some degree, that specific value which we call moral goodness. And by the principles of ethics we mean the principles which truly define and explicate this value. Now neither the truth nor the falsity of any religion affects these fundamental and essential conditions. If the teachings of religion be accepted as true, then certain factors may be added to the concrete practical situation; but if so, these fall within the field of morality and must be submitted to ethical principles. Thus, if there be a God whose personality permits of reciprocal social relations with man, then man ought, in the moral sense, to be prudent with reference to him, and may reasonably demand justice or good-will at his hands.

⁴Isaiah 1 15-17.

But the mere existence of a God, whatever be his nature, can neither invalidate nor establish the ethical principles of prudence, justice, and good-will. Were a God whose existence is proved to recommend injustice, this would not affect in the slightest degree the moral obligation to be just. Moral revelation stands upon precisely the same footing as revelation in the sphere of theoretical truth: its acceptance can be justified only through its being confirmed by experience or reason. In other words, it is the office of revelation to reveal truth, but not to establish it. In consequence of this fact it may even be necessary that man should redeem the truth in defiance of what he takes to be the disposition of God. Neither individual conscience nor the moral judgment of mankind can be superseded or modified save through a higher insight which these may themselves be brought to confirm. Whatever a man may think of God, if he continues to live in the midst of his fellows, he places himself within the jurisdiction of the laws which obtain there. Morality is the method of reconciling and fulfilling the interests of beings having the capacity to conduct themselves rationally, and ethics is the formulation of the general principles which underlie this method. The attempt to live rationally—and, humanly speaking, there is no alternative save the total abnegation of life—brings one within the jurisdiction of these principles, precisely as thinking brings one within the jurisdiction of the principles of logic, or as the moving of one's body brings one within the jurisdiction of the principles of mechanics.

Religion, then, mediates an enlightenment which it does not of itself originate. In religious belief the truth which is derived from a studious observation of nature and the cumulative experience of life is heightened and vivified. Like all belief, religion is conservative; and rightly so. But in the long run, steadily and inevitably, it responds to every forward step which man is enabled to take through the exercise of his natural cognitive powers. Only so does religion serve its real purpose of benefiting life by expanding its horizon and defining its course.

I have hitherto left out of account a certain stress or insistence that must now be recognized as fundamental in religious development. This I shall call the optimistic bias. This bias is not

accidental or arbitrary, but significant of the fact that religion, like morality, springs from the same motive as life itself, and makes towards the same goal of fruition and abundance. Life is essentially interest, and interest is essentially positive or provident; fear is incidental to hope, and hate to love. Man seeks to know the worst only in order that he may avoid or counterwork it in the furtherance of his interests. Religion is the result of man's search for support in the last extremity. This is true even when men are largely preoccupied with the mere struggle for existence. It appears more and more plainly as life becomes aggressive and is engaged in the constructive enterprise of civilization. Religion expresses man's highest hope of attainment, whether this be conceived as the efficacy of a fetish or the kingdom of God.

Such, then, are the general facts of religion and the fundamental critical principles which justify and define its development. Religion is man's belief in salvation, his confident appeal to the overruling control of his ultimate fortunes. The reconstruction of religious belief is made necessary whenever it fails to express the last verified truth, cosmological or ethical. The direction of religious development is thus a resultant of two forces: the optimistic bias, or the saving hope of life, and rational criticism, or the progressive revelation of the principles which define life and its environment.

I shall proceed now to the consideration of types of religion which illustrate this critical reconstruction. The types which I shall select represent certain forms of inadequacy which I think it important to distinguish. They are only roughly historical, as is necessarily the case, since all religions represent different types in the various stages of their development and in the different interpretations which are put on them in any given time by various classes of believers. I shall consider in turn, using the terms in a manner to be precisely indicated as we proceed, *superstition*, *tutelary religion*, and two forms of *philosophical religion*, the one *metaphysical idealism*, and the other *moral idealism*.

Superstition is distinguished by a lack of organization both in man and his environment. It is a direct cross-relationship between an elementary interest, passion, or need, and some isolated and capricious natural power. The deity is externally

related to the worshipper, having private interests of his own which the worshipper respects only from motives of prudence. Religious observance takes the form of barter or propitiation—*do ut des, do ut abeas*. The method of superstition is arbitrary, furthermore, in that it is defined only by the liking or aversion of an unprincipled agency.

Let us consider briefly the type of superstition which is associated with the most primitive stage in the development of society. The worshipper has neither raised nor answered the ethical question as to what is his greatest good. Indeed, he is much more concerned to meet the pressing needs of life than he is to co-ordinate them or understand to what they lead. He cannot even be said to be actuated by the principle of rational self-interest. Like the brute whose lot is similar to his own, he feels his wants severally, and is forced to meet them as they arise or be trampled under foot in the struggle for existence. There is little co-ordination of his interests beyond that which is provided for in the organic and social structure with which nature has endowed him. Over and above the instinct of self-preservation he recognizes in custom the principle of tribal or racial solidarity. But this is proof, not so much of a recognition of community of interest, as of the vagueness of his ideas concerning the boundaries of his own selfhood. The very fact that his interests are scattering and loosely knit prevents him from clearly distinguishing his own. He readily identifies himself not only with his body, but with his clothing, his habitation, and various trinkets which have been accidentally associated with his life. It is only natural that he should similarly identify himself with those other beings like himself with whom he is connected by the bonds of blood and of intimate contact. Morally, then, primitive man is an indefinite and incoherent aggregate of interests which have not yet assumed the form even of individual and community purpose.

To turn to the second, or cosmological, component, we find that primitive man's conception of ultimate powers is like his conception of his own interests in being both indefinite and incoherent. In consequence of the daily vicissitudes of his fortune, he is well aware that he is affected for better or for worse by agencies

which fall outside the more familiar routine operations of society and nature. So great is the disproportion between the calculable and the incalculable elements of his life that he is like a man crouching in the dark expecting a blow from any quarter. The agencies whose working can be discounted in advance form his secular world; but this world is narrow and meagre, and is overshadowed by a beyond which is both mysterious and terrible. Of the world beyond he has no single comprehensive idea, but he acknowledges it in his expectation of the injuries and benefits which he may at any time receive from it. It is an abyss whose depths he has never sounded, but which he is forced practically to recognize, since he is at the mercy of forces which emanate from it.

The method of primitive religion is the inevitable sequel. In behalf of the interests which represent him, man must here, as ever, make the best terms he can with the powers which beset him. He has no concern with these powers except the desire to propitiate them. He has no knowledge of their working excepting as respects their bearing upon his interests. Obeying a law of human nature which is as valid now as then, he seeks for remedies whose proof is the cure which they effect. Let the association between a certain action on his own part and a favorable turn in the tide of fortune once be established, and the subsequent course of events will seem to confirm it. Coincidences are remembered, and exceptions forgotten. Furthermore, there always remains, as the final justification for his belief in the effectual working of the established plan, the difficulty of proving any other alternative plan to be better.

But, in order to understand superstition, it is not necessary to reconstruct the earliest period in the history of society, nor even to study contemporary savage life; for the superstitious intelligence and the superstitious method survive in every stage of development. They appear, for example, in mediaeval Christianity; in Clovis's appeal to Christ on the battlefield, "Clotilda says that Thou art the Son of the living God, and that Thou dost give victory to those who put their trust in Thee. I have besought my gods, but they give me no aid. I see well that their strength is naught. I beseech Thee, and I will believe in Thee, only save

me from the hands of mine enemies." The same period is represented by the petition attributed to Saint Eloi, "Give, Lord, since we have given! *Da, Domine, quia dedimus!*"⁵ In modern life the motive of superstition pervades almost all worship, appearing in prayer for rain or the healing of the sick, and in sundry expectations of special favor to be gained by service or importunity.

The application of critical enlightenment to this type of religion has already been made with general consent. It is recognized that morally superstition represents the merely prudential level of life. It bespeaks a state of panic or a narrow regard for isolated needs and desires. Furthermore, it tends to emphasize these considerations and at the same time degrade the object of worship through claiming the attention of God in their behalf. The deity is conceived not under the form of a broad and consecutive purpose, but under the form of a casual and desultory good nature.

But superstition has been corrected mainly by the advancement of scientific knowledge. Science has pronounced finally against the belief in localized or isolated natural processes. Whether the mechanical theory be accepted or not, its method is beyond question in so far as it defines laws and brings all events and phenomena under their control. So far as nature is concerned, there can be no favoritism, no special dispensations, no bargaining over the counter.

The correction of superstition brings us to our second type, which I have chosen to call *tutelary religion*. It is distinguished by the fact that life is organized into a definite purpose, which, although still narrow and partisan with reference to humanity at large, nevertheless embraces and subordinates the manifold desires of a community. The deity represents this purpose in the cosmos at large, and rallies the forces of nature to its support. He is no longer capricious, but is possessed of a character defined by systematic devotion to an end. His ways are the ways of effectiveness. Furthermore, since his aims are identical with those of his worshippers, he is now loved and served for himself. It follows that he will demand of his followers only conformity to those rules which define the realization of the com-

⁵ Munro and Sellery, *Mediaeval Civilization*, pp. 80, 75.

mon aim, and that these rules will be enforced by the community as the conditions of its secular well-being. Ritual is no longer arbitrary, but is based on an enlightened knowledge of ways and means.

While this type of religion is clearly present in the most primitive tribal worship, it is best exemplified when a racial or national purpose manifests itself aggressively and self-consciously, as in the cases of ancient Assyria and Egypt. Here God is identified with the kingship, both being symbols of nationality. Among the Assyrians the national purpose was predominantly one of military aggrandizement. Istar communicates to Esarhaddon this promise of support: "Fear not, O Esarhaddon; the breath of inspiration which speaks to thee is spoken by me, and I conceal it not. . . . I am the mighty mistress, Istar of Arbela, who have put thine enemies to flight before thy feet. Where are the words which I speak unto thee, that thou hast not believed them? . . . I am Istar of Arbela; in front of thee and at thy side do I march. Fear not, thou art in the midst of those that can heal thee; I am in the midst of thy host."⁶

Egyptian nationality was identified rather with the principles of agriculture and political organization. The deity is the fertilizing Nile, or the judge of right conduct. There is recorded in the Book of the Dead the pleading of a soul before Osiris, in which the commands of the god are thus identified with the conditions of national welfare.

I have not committed fraud and evil against men.
I have not diverted justice in the judgment hall.
I have not known meanness.
I have not caused a man to do more than his day's work.
I have not caused a slave to be ill treated by his overseer.
I have not committed murder.
I have not spoiled the bread of offering in the temples.
I have not added to the weight of the balance.
I have not taken milk from the mouths of children.
I have not turned aside the water at the time of inundation.
I have not cut off an arm of the river in its course.⁷

⁶ Sayce, *Babylonians and Assyrians*, p. 253.

⁷ Wiedemann, *Religion of the Ancient Egyptians*, p. 250.

Similar illustrations might be drawn from the nationalistic phase of Hebraism. The same principle appears in mediaeval Christianity, and is thus embodied in the prologue of the Salic Law, "Long live the Christ who loves the Franks." In more recent times one might point to the Christianity of the Puritan revolution, not wholly misrepresented by the maxim popularly attributed to Cromwell, "Put your trust in God and keep your powder dry," or in Poor Richard's observation that "God helps them that help themselves."

Such is the religion of nationalism, sectarianism, of sustained but narrow purpose. I shall not attempt to formulate exhaustively the ideas through which this religion has been corrected. It is clear that its defect lies in its partisanship. All forms of partisanship yield slowly but inevitably to the higher conception of social solidarity. Such enlightenment reflects a recognition of community of interest, and a widening of sympathy through intercourse and acquaintance. Tutelary religion, in short, is corrected through the validity of the ethical principles of justice and good will. The cosmological correction of this type of religion is due to the same enlightenment that discredits superstition, a knowledge, namely, of a systematic unity of the cosmos. The laws of nature are as indifferent to private purposes as they are to private desires, and whether they be personal or social in their scope. Furthermore the universality of God is recognized in principle in the rules of worship. For a god of war or agriculture or politics cannot be privately appropriated. If the observance of the principles proper to these institutions brings success to one, it brings success to all. In short, a god of nationality must be a god of all nations.

The correction of tutelary religion brings us at length to a type which may be said to be formally enlightened. Both components of belief, the ethical and the cosmological, are universalized. I shall call this type, in its general form, *philosophical religion*, since it recognizes the unities which systematic reflection defines. It recognizes, on the one hand, the summing up of life in a universal ideal, and on the other hand, a summing up of the total environment in some scientifically formulated generalization. It affirms the priority of justice and good-will

over party interest, and the determination of the world without reference to special privilege. Religion is now the issue between the good—the highest good, the good of all—and the undivided cosmos.

Within the limits of philosophical religion thus broadly defined, there is yet provision for almost endless variety of belief. Religions may still differ in tradition, symbolism, and ritual. They may differ as moral codes and sentiments differ, and reflect all shades of opinion as this is determined by discovery and criticism.

But I propose to confine myself to a difference which is at once the most broad and fundamental, and the most clearly defined, in contemporary controversy. This difference relates to neither ethics nor cosmology exclusively, but to the religious judgment itself in which these two are united. How is the universe in its entirety to be construed with reference to the good? In both of the answers which I propose to consider it is claimed that goodness in some sense possesses the world. Hence both may be called *idealisms*. But in one of these answers, which I shall call *metaphysical idealism*, the cosmological motive receives the greater emphasis. The good is construed in terms of being; and, in order that it may be absolutely identified therewith, its original nature must, if necessary, be compromised. In the other, the ethical motive predominates. It is held that goodness must not lose its meaning, even if it be necessary that its claims upon the cosmos should be somewhat abated.

Metaphysical idealism is the extreme form of the optimistic bias. It provides a moral individual with a sense of proprietorship in the universe; it justifies him in the belief that the moral victory has been won from all eternity. Goodness is held to be the very essence and condition of being.

Let me briefly state the inherent difficulty in this philosophy of religion. Being is judged to be identical with good. But the world of experience is not good; it must therefore be condemned as unreal. Wherein, then, lies the goodness of being? If an empty formalism is to be avoided, the all-good and all-real must be restored to the world of experience. But, as the all-real it cannot consistently be identified with only a part of that world; and if it be identified with the whole, its all-goodness contradicts the moral

distinction between good and evil. The theory is now confronted with the opposite danger, that of materialism, or moral promiscuousness. Let me illustrate this full swing of the pendulum from formalism to materialism by briefly summarizing certain well-known types of religious philosophy.

At the formalistic extreme stands the Buddhistic pessimism, which rests on a recognition of the inevitable taint of this world, of the implication of evil in life. To avoid this taint, the all-real and all-good must be freed even from existence. It can be conceived and attained only by denial. Nirvana is at once the all-real, the all-good, and—in terms of the existent world—nothing.

Other-worldliness is the Christian modification of the Oriental philosophy of illusion. Heaven is a world beyond, to be exchanged for this. It is not constituted by the denial of this world, as is Nirvana, but access to it is conditioned by such denial. It is goodness and happiness hypostasized, and offered as compensation for martyrdom. But since every natural impulse and source of satisfaction must be repudiated, it remains a purely formal conception, except in so far as the worldly imagination unlawfully figures it. Rigorously construed, it consists only in obedience, a willing of God's will, whatever that may be.

Mysticism, which appears as a motive in all religions of this type, defines the all-real and all-good in terms of the consummation of a progression certain intermediate stages of which constitute man's present activities. In Brahmanism, God is the perfect unity, which may be approximated by dwelling on identities and ignoring differences; in Platonism, God is the good-for-all, which may be approximated by dwelling exclusively upon the utilities and fitnesses of things. The absolute world still remains beyond this world and excludes it, although a hint of its actual nature may now be obtained. But there at once appears a formidable difficulty. So long as the absolute world is wholly separated from this world, and therefore purely formal, evil need not be imputed to it; but at the moment when it is conceived by completing and perfecting certain processes belonging to this world, it is committed to these processes with all their implications, and tends to be usurped by them. In other words, heaven, in so far as it obtains meaning, grows worldly.

In the conception which may be termed *panlogism*, heaven is boldly removed to earth. It is identified with laws or other universals that lie within the scope of human intelligence and control the course of nature. God is now immanent rather than transcendent; he has obtained a certain definable content. But the difficulty which has already appeared in mysticism now grows more formidable. How can it be said that a being that coincides with the known laws of nature works only good? Among the Stoics the attempt was made to conceive all necessities as somehow "beneficial," as somehow good in the commonly accepted sense of the term.⁸ But even the Stoics found themselves compelled to abandon the common conception of goodness. And in Spinoza the motive of panlogism is clear and uncompromising. God as the immanent order of the world is good only in that he is necessary—good only in so far as he satisfies the logical interest and enables the mind to understand. In panlogism, then, we find metaphysical idealism already compelled in behalf of its cardinal principle to deny the moral consciousness. But this is not all. For, even were it to be admitted that mere system and order constitute the good wholly without reference to their bearing on the concerns of life, the fact remains that even such a good does not fairly represent the character of this world. For experience conveys not only law, but also irrelevance and chaos; not only harmony but also discord.

To meet this last difficulty, and at the same time better to provide for the complexity of human interests, metaphysical idealism finally assumes the aesthetic form. The absolute world, the all-real and all-good, is boldly construed in terms of the historical process itself, with all its concreteness and immediacy. Endless detail, contrast, and even contradiction may be brought under the form of aesthetic value. The very flux of experience, the very struggles and defeats of life, are not without their picturesque and dramatic quality. Upon this romantic love of tumult and privation is founded the last of all metaphysical idealisms. A strange sequel to the doctrine of despair with which our brief survey began!

⁸ Cf., e.g., Epictetus, Discourses, chap. 8.

I can only recapitulate most briefly the characteristic limitations of an aesthetic idealism. Firstly, in spite of the fact that aesthetic value may be extraordinarily comprehensive in its content, as a value it is none the less narrow and exclusive. For in order that experience may have aesthetic value, an aesthetic interest must be taken in it. And even were all experience to satisfy some such interest, this would in no wise provide for the endless variety of non-aesthetic interests that are also taken in it. Thus, were it to be proved that life on the whole is picturesque, this would in no way affect the fact that it is also painful, stultifying, and otherwise abounding in evil.

But, even if it were to be granted that aesthetic value embraces and subordinates all other values, this higher value would still exist only where such an aesthetic interest was actually fulfilled. If it were assumed that the totality of the world is pleasing in the sight of God, this would in no way affect the fact that it is otherwise in the eyes of men. Those who furnish a spectacle which has dramatic value for an observer do not themselves share in that value. It is an incontrovertible fact that even the aesthetic interests of men are actually defeated; and this whether or no some other aesthetic interest, that for example of a divine onlooker, is fulfilled.

But the radical defect of this aesthetic philosophy of religion lies in its absolute discrediting of moral distinctions. Optimism has so far overreached itself as to sacrifice the very meaning of goodness. In order that the ideal may possess the world, it has been reduced to the world. God is no more than a name for the unmitigated reality. Like Hardy's Spirit of the Years, he is the mere affirmation of things as they are:

I view, not urge; nor more than mark
 What designate your titles Good and Ill.
 'Tis not in me to feel with, or against,
 These flesh-hinged mannikins Its hand upwinds
 To click-clack off Its preadjusted laws;
 But only through my centuries to behold
 Their aspects, and their movements, and their mould.⁹

⁹ Hardy, *The Dynasts*, Part i, p. 5.

Morally, there could be no more sinister interpretation of life. It offers itself as a philosophy of hope, promising the lover of good that his purpose shall be fulfilled, nay, that it is fulfilled from all eternity. But when the pledge is redeemed, it is found to stipulate that the good shall mean only life as it is already possessed. In other words, man is promised what he wants if he will agree to want what he has. This is worse than a sorry jest. It is a philosophy of moral dissolution, discrediting every downright judgment of good and evil, removing the grounds upon which is based every single-minded endeavor to purify and consummate life. John Davidson says: "Irony integrates good and evil, the constituents of the universe. It is that Beyond-Good-and-Evil that somebody clamored for."¹⁰ Irony is indeed the last refuge of that uncompromising optimism that equates goodness and being.

But the bankruptcy of metaphysical idealism does not end the matter. There is another idealism in which religious faith both confirms moral endeavor and gives it the incentive of hope. This idealism establishes itself upon an unequivocal acceptance of moral truth. It calls good good and evil evil, with all the finality which attaches to the human experience of these things, leaving no room for compromise. Its faith lies in the expectation that the world shall become good through the elimination of evil; it manifests itself in the resolution to hasten that time. God is loved for the enemies he has made. Evil is hated without reservation as none of his doing, and man is free to reverence the Lord his God with all his heart.

From the standpoint of *moral idealism* the universe resumes something of its pristine ruggedness and grandeur. If, as James says, "the world appears as something more epic than dramatic," the dignity of life is enhanced and not diminished on that account.¹¹ Life is not a spiritual exercise the results of which are discounted in advance; but is actually creative, fashioning and perfecting a good that has never been. And the moment evil is conceived as the necessary but diminishing complement to partial success, the sting of it is gone. Evil as a temporary and accidental necessity is tolerable; but not so an evil which is

¹⁰ Davidson, A Rosary, p. 88.

¹¹ James, Pragmatism, p. 144.

absolutely necessary, and which must be construed with some hypothetical divine satisfaction.

This in no way contradicts the fact that the fullest life under present conditions involves contact with evil. Innocence must be tragic if it is not to be weak. Jesus without the cross would possess something of that quality of unreality which attaches to Aristotle's high-minded man. But this does not prove that life involves evil; it proves only that life will be narrow and complacent when it is out of touch with things as they are. Since evil is now real, he who altogether escapes it is ignorant and idle, taking no hand in the real work to be done. Not to feel pain when pain abounds, not to bear some share of the burden, is indeed cause for shame. In that remarkable allegory, "The Man who was Thursday," Chesterton has most vividly presented this truth. In the last confrontation, the real anarchist, the spokesman of Satan, accuses the friends of order of being happy, of having been protected from suffering. But the philosopher, who has hitherto been unable to understand the despair to which he and his companions have been driven, repels this slander.

"I see everything," he cried, "everything that there is. Why does each thing on the earth war against each other thing? Why does each small thing in the world have to fight against the world itself? . . . So that each thing that obeys law may have the glory and isolation of the anarchist. So that each man fighting for order may be as brave and good a man as the dynamiter. So that the real lie of Satan may be flung back in the face of this blasphemer, so that by tears and torture we may earn the right to say to this man, 'You lie!' No agonies can be too great to buy the right to say to this accuser, 'We also have suffered.'

"It is not true that we have never been broken. We have been broken upon the wheel. . . . We have descended into hell. We were complaining of unforgettable miseries even at the very moment when this man entered insolently to accuse us of happiness. I repel the slander; we have not been happy."¹²

But the charge of happiness is to be repelled as a slander only because there are real sufferers in the world to make the charge. It is after all not happiness but insensibility which is the real

¹² Chesterton, *The Man who was Thursday*, p. 278.

disgrace. If the suffering is real, not to see it, not to feel it, not to heal it, is intolerable. To say, however, that suffering is willfully caused in order that it may eventually contribute to an ultimate reconciliation, is to charge God with something worse than complacency. If life is a real tragedy, it can be endured, and to enter into it will bring the deep satisfaction which every form of heroism affords. But if the tragedy of life be preconceived and wilfully perpetrated, it must be resented for the sake of self-respect. Even man possesses a dignity which is not consistent with puppetry and mock heroics.

Moral idealism means to interpret life consistently with ethical, scientific, and metaphysical truth. It endeavors to justify the maximum of hope, without compromising or confusing any enlightened judgment of truth. In this it is, I think, not only consistent with the spirit of a liberal and rational age, but also with the primary motive of religion. There can be no religion with reservations, fearful of increasing light. No man can do the work of religion without an open and candid mind as well as an indomitable purpose.

I cannot here elaborate the evidence upon which moral idealism is grounded; but it might be broadly classified as ethical, cosmological, and historical. The ethical ground of moral idealism is the virtual unity of life, the working therein of one eventual purpose sustained by the good will of all moral beings. The cosmological proof lies in the moral fruitfulness and plasticity of nature. The historical proof lies in the fact of moral progress, in the advent and steady betterment of life.

In conclusion I wish to revert to the topic of the generic proof of religion. We have defined the tests which any special religion must meet, and unless conformably to such tests it is possible to justify some form of idealism, it is clear that the full possibilities of religion as a source of strength and consolation must fail to be realized. But it may now be affirmed that there is a moral value in religion which is independent of the cosmological considerations which prove or disprove a special religion. No scientific or metaphysical evidence can controvert the fact that man is engaged in an enterprise which comprehends all the actualities and possibilities of life, and that the success of this enterprise is con-

ditioned in the end on the compliance of the universe. A summing up of the situation as involving these two factors is morally inevitable. Some solution of the problem, assimilated and enacted, in other words, some form of piety, is no more than the last stage of moral growth.

The value of religious belief, in this generic moral sense, consists in the enlargement of the circle of life. Man knows the best and the worst. He walks in the open, apprehending the world in its full sweep and just proportions. An inclusive view of the universe, whatever it may reveal, throws into relief the lot of man. Religion promulgates the idea of life as a whole, and composes and proportions its activities with reference to their ultimate end. Religion advocates not the virtues in their severalty, but the whole moral enterprise. With this it affiliates all the sundry activities of life, thus bringing both action and thought under the form of service of the ideal. At the same time it offers a supreme object for the passions, which are otherwise divided against themselves, or vented upon unworthy and fantastical objects. Through being thus economized and guided, these moving energies may be brought to support moral endeavor and bear it with them in their current.

Piety carries with it also that sense of high resolve without which life must be haunted with a sense of ignominy. This is the immediate value of the good will: the full deliverance of one's self to the cause of goodness. This value is independent of attainment. It is that *doing of one's best* which is the least that one can do. Having sped one's action with good will, one can only leave the outcome to the confluence and summing of like forces. But such service is blessed both in the eventualities and in a present harmony as well. The good of participation in the greatest and most worthy enterprise is proved in its lending fruitfulness, dignity, and momentousness to action; but also in its infusing the individual life with that ardor and tenderness which is called the love of humanity and of God, and which is the only form of happiness that fully measures up to the awakened moral consciousness.

Since religion emphasizes the unity of life and supplies it with meaning and dignity, it is the function of religion to kindle moral enthusiasm in society at large. Religion is responsible for the

prestige of morality. As an institution, it is the appointed guardian and medium of that supreme value which is hidden from the world; of that finality which, in the course of human affairs, is so easily lost to view and so infrequently proved. It is therefore the function of the religious leader to make men lovers, not of the parts, but of the whole of goodness. Embarrassed by their very plenitude of life, men require to have the good will that is in them aroused and put in control. This, then, is the work of religion: to strike home to the moral nature itself, and to induce in men a keener and more vivid realization of their latent preference for the higher over the lower values. This office requires for its fulfilment a constructive moral imagination, a power to arouse and direct the contagious emotions, and the use of the means of personality and ritual for the creation of a sweetening and uplifting environment.

In culture and religion human life is brought to the elevation which is proper to it. They are both forms of discipline through which is inculcated that spirit of magnanimity and service which is the mark of spiritual maturity. But while culture is essentially contemplative, far-seeing, sensitive, and tolerant, religion is more stirring and vital. Both are love of perfection, but culture is admiration; religion concern. "Not he that saith Lord, Lord, but he that doeth the will of his Father, shall be saved." In religion the old note of fear is always present. It is a perpetual watchfulness lest the work of life be undone, or lest a chance for the best be forfeited.